

Davis, Sonya (MRC)

From: jackcrevelle NEILL [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 31, 2008 6:05 PM
To: Davis, Sonya (MRC)
Subject: Red drum tagging study

I am writing in support of funding the proposed study to place pop-up satellite tags in large red drum caught with recreational fishing gear.

A smaller study was recently conducted with the winter-time, live-eel striped bass fishery. There have been concerns about the catch-release-fishery at the high rise of the CBBT and the waters near the Concrete Ships after the bay season is closed. Questions were raised about how many fish were being killed due to hook-and-release mortality. Should we stop allowing release citations for this fishery in order to discourage catch-and-release fishing during the closed season? In general, even during the open season, should we require the use of circle hooks while live-baiting for striped bass? This small study showed that our winter-time striped bass are hardy creatures. Hook-and-release mortality was zero. It did not matter what type of hook was used. J-hooks did have a greater chance of hooking deep but those fish lived too. This indicates, barring further research, there is no need to make changes in regulations or in the VSWFT. This is important information for us to know. Detailed analysis of water column usage during different weather, time of day, tides and so on is still being looked at. One interesting group of three fish were tagged at the same time off of Fisherman's Island. These fish were feeding together and were the same size. Obviously from the same school so they should have migrated together. Thirty days later, one had gone north, up the coast, one had moved south down the coast, and one had migrated into the bay.

Similar questions exist with our trophy red drum fishery. This fish population was depressed enough that a complete moratorium was placed on the take of large red drum. This is a very popular catch-and-release fishery. We know next to nothing about what happens to these large red drum (black drum too for that matter) after they are released. What percentage of these fish die as a result of the catch-and-release fishery? Where do they go? We know where we catch them but where are they when we are not catching them? Are these fish the same fish caught in Carolina or do we have a separate population? Drum have long been part of the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program. We have a pretty good return rate for puppy drum but an extremely low return rate for tags placed in large drum. I've tagged a lot of large red drum over the years. So far, I have had no recaptures nor have I caught a large red (or black) drum with a tag in it. I have with small drum. What is happening with these large fish?

This study will find out.

Dr. Kennedy Neill, III

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